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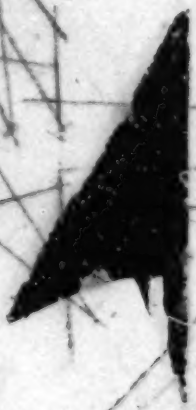
LYONEL FEININGER



CURT VALENTIN GALLERY

FORMERLY BUCHHOLZ GALLERY

32 EAST 57 STREET, NEW YORK 22

Lyonel Feininger

This exhibition has been arranged
in celebration of
the artist's eightieth birthday
which took place on July 17, 1951

March 18 — April 12, 1952

CURT VALENTIN GALLERY

FORMERLY BUCHHOLZ GALLERY

32 EAST 57 STREET • NEW YORK

"To think, to dream, mentally to conceive beautiful works, is a delightful occupation. It is like inhaling enchanted fumes; it is to live the lives of houris who exist solely for the enjoyment of their whims. The work of art at this stage appears in the grace of its infancy, in the transports of creation, it is endowed at the same time with the perfumed colors of flowers, and with a foretaste of the juice of the ripe fruit. Those are the pleasures of conception. By the public he, already, is rated a great man who can thus verbally tell of his projects—all artists and writers possess this faculty.—But to produce! To give birth to the babe, laboriously to bring him up! To put him to sleep chockful of milk every night; to kiss him good-morning every day with the inexhaustible heart of a mother; to change him, to dress him a hundred times in the most charming clothes which, no sooner put on him, he instantly ruins; never to lose patience with the convulsions of this exuberant vitality; gradually to shape it into the masterpiece that seems to be breathing if it is sculpture, that speaks to every heart in literature, that, in painting, appeals to everybody's memories, and to every heart in music—

of such are the labors of execution. At every instant the hand must be ready to obey the call of the intellect. But the intellect is not capable of producing creative forces at will, any more than the power to love is continuous."

From Balzac
La Cousine Bette

Translation by
Lux Feininger

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1914 [2]

FEININGER: FROM LETTERS TO JULIA
[1906–1936]

"A year ago something very special happened to me: I learned to detect color in nature. This year I begin to understand that what we see in nature has to be transmuted in order to become a picture. There could hardly be a greater contrast between my efforts then, and now. More than ever I need solitude for concentration. I have seen too much of "Nature," and I see that I have to free myself of an unwanted inclination toward naturalism (with banality as the result). There are times when I feel like a dare-devil, and then again I cannot find a single piece among my work that would stand up to survive in the long run. Sometimes I hate and abhor nature, I like my pictures so much better.

1917 [3]

What I have been working on for over a week grows into a unit, is full of new things which surpass by far my mere rational understanding. Slowly I see a future dawning for myself.

* *

My contentment is founded on creative work. My humanity is advanced thereby but in reverse also influencing and aiding my endeavors.

* *

In my last picture I painted the sky a silvery yellow which was like a revelation. Other colors which I didn't know before are intriguing me.

* *

For once I am through with theorizing, and in a period of intuitive creative work. The technical means are of secondary importance, no more a worry to me.

* *

I have to compare my old works with the new ones. I am living through one of those very rare periods during which one may look backwards for a moment, and in the midst of struggle is able to review the work. Then, as though a light went out one gropes on in darkness, and uncertainty, guided by one's instinct only.

* *

For days I am preoccupied with trees only, I learn a lot about volume. How little the "clever" brain alone can accomplish in art.

* *

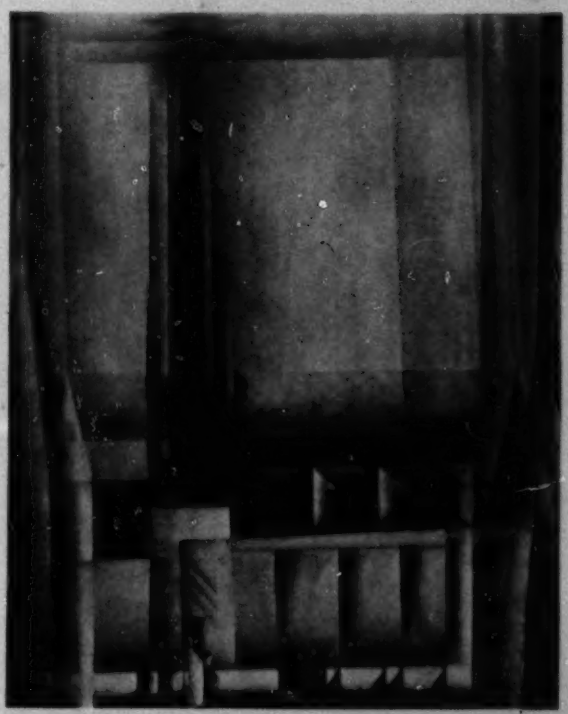
Oh dear, how beautiful and rich the world all of a sudden becomes when, at last, the soul of a poor painter achieves harmony. How one's perception is widened, and the feeling of happiness is overwhelming. It seems as if I could never again be disheartened as far as painting is concerned. Deep within me the consciousness of enormous power to accomplish work is like a pent-up ocean.

* *

I realize how much less sentimental I have become in my work, also the earlier paintings did not have much spatial depth, I had modeled the surface only.

* *

I am longing before the winter sets in to see the shafts of light in the forest, the hazy air and prismatic colors over the roots of the fir trees. The weeks out there have done me lots of good. It is not a matter of indifference whether we create, for the love of color alone, ornaments or whatever it may be. The mystical



1922 [7]

quality in the object has always kept me spellbound.

* *

Another day gone by, and how full of longing, solitude and melancholy thoughts. Every evening the same disappointment about the work, a picture that won't grow into a unit. Each morning it stares at me in its plight, and the fight is taken up once more. Such strain wears one out.

* *

It seems to me of the utmost importance to become more simple. Again and again I realize this when I come to Bach. His art is incomparably terse, and that is one of the reasons that it is so mighty and eternally alive. I must avoid becoming entangled and fettered in complexities.

* *

Wandering along the beach there is an endless succession of pictures turning up in my phantasy. I am longing for a fulfillment of these visions. For a long time I haven't felt this well bubbling up within me.

* *

Certain hours seem predestined to be incorporated in one's consciousness as most precious memories. I am living through a time of receptivity. Later when transported to other places and environments I can re-live it all, and re-create in pictures.

* *

Pursuit of art is for us the only way toward clarification, to free ourselves of all that is doubtful and superfluous. My work at painting presents the battlefield on which I have to overcome my insufficiencies.

and resolve every doubt in order to attain final unity. We are always trusting that one day we may succeed.

* *

In one respect, perhaps, my work may be considered of significance: its passionate quest for strictest delineation of space, without any compromising. In the glaring sun these days, seconded by shadows cast on brilliantly lit surfaces I see motifs of colossal consequence. A perfectly new plane-space conception.

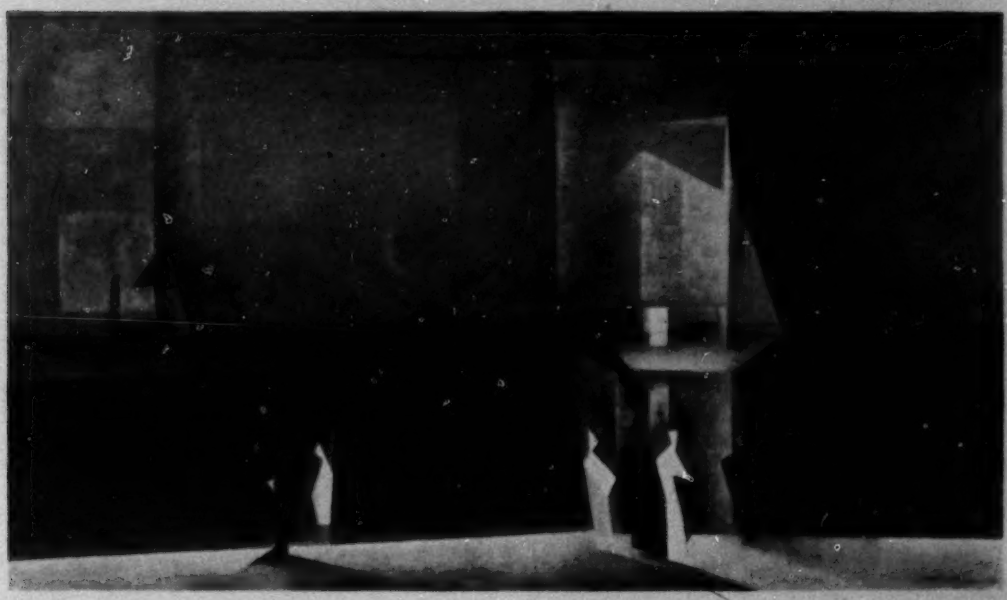
* *

It seems as if for the first time I were painting with my eyes open. Full of competence and cunning I am able to find the right solution, avoiding the many traps set for me by form and color.

* *

The feeling for form is secure and powerful, there is less mechanical construction, my forms are less tight, and more rhythmical. To seek form gives me support spiritually.

* *



1925 [8]

About my work, except that I *am* working, I had best preserve silence. I will only say that, since yesterday, I have hopes of accomplishing something.

* *

I am getting on now with irresistible power. The long jinx in my painting is at last overcome, the period of discouraged effort, of continual disappointment, and worst of all deadly loss of confidence in my powers as a painter is ended. It changes everything for me. I've fought my way through to a stage where everything is obeying my will—no, better still, as if some higher principle were forcing me into obedience. I have arrived at a turning-point. It seems like a miracle. Re-awakened intuition has joined forces with my technical abilities. Today I wouldn't even want to paint as 20 years ago, at the time of my "strongest" pictures. I want to paint as I can do now."

Translation by Julia Feininger

1937 [12]

CATALOGUE

OILS

1909

1 Longeuil 31½x39¾"

1914

2 Allée 31¾x39½"

1917

3 Leviathan 32x39½"

4 Markwippach 31¾x39¾"

1921

5 Architecture I 39½x31"

6 Gelmeroda VIII 39½x31½"

1922

7 Lady in Mauve 39½x31½"

1924

8 Blue Marine 18½x32¾"

1925

9 Town Gate Tower II 39½x31½"

1929

10 Village Street 31½x39½"

1933

11 Bathers 21½x20¾"

1937

12 Yellow Village Church III 31½x39½"

13 Four-Masted Bark 18¼x19"

1939

14 Storm Brewing 19x30½"

1943

15 Coast of Nevermore II 19x32"

1945

16 Manhattan, Dusk 23x36"

1946

17 Dusk (Gaberndorf) 28x39"

1947

18 The Baltic (V-Cloud) 17x29"

1948

19 Afterglow II 17x24"

20 Hidden Village 20x24"

1951

21 Lunar Webb 21x36"
Collection of Milton Lowenthal

22 Spell 30x24"

23 Old Gables 16x24"

24 Manhattan Subject 15x22"

25 The Chimney Pots 20x33"

26 Spring 13x20"

1951

1951 [24]

1951 [25]

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WATERCOLORS AND DRAWINGS

1950

27 Young Moon 12x18½"

28 Study—Yellow and Black 9x12"

29 Cape "thistle" 9x12"

30 Fan-shaped Cloud 11⅛x18½"

31 Washington Square, Evening Lights 19¾x15"

32 Ray of Light, Plymouth 12x18½"

33 Paris 11¼x17¾"

34 Dancing Sky 12x18¼"

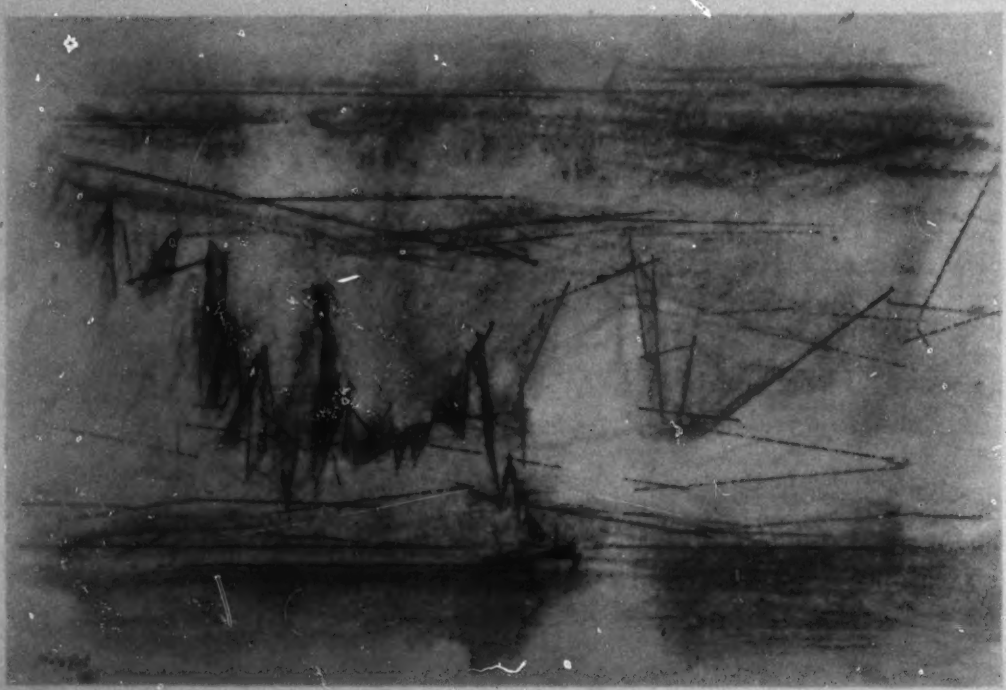
35 Luminosity 15½x20"

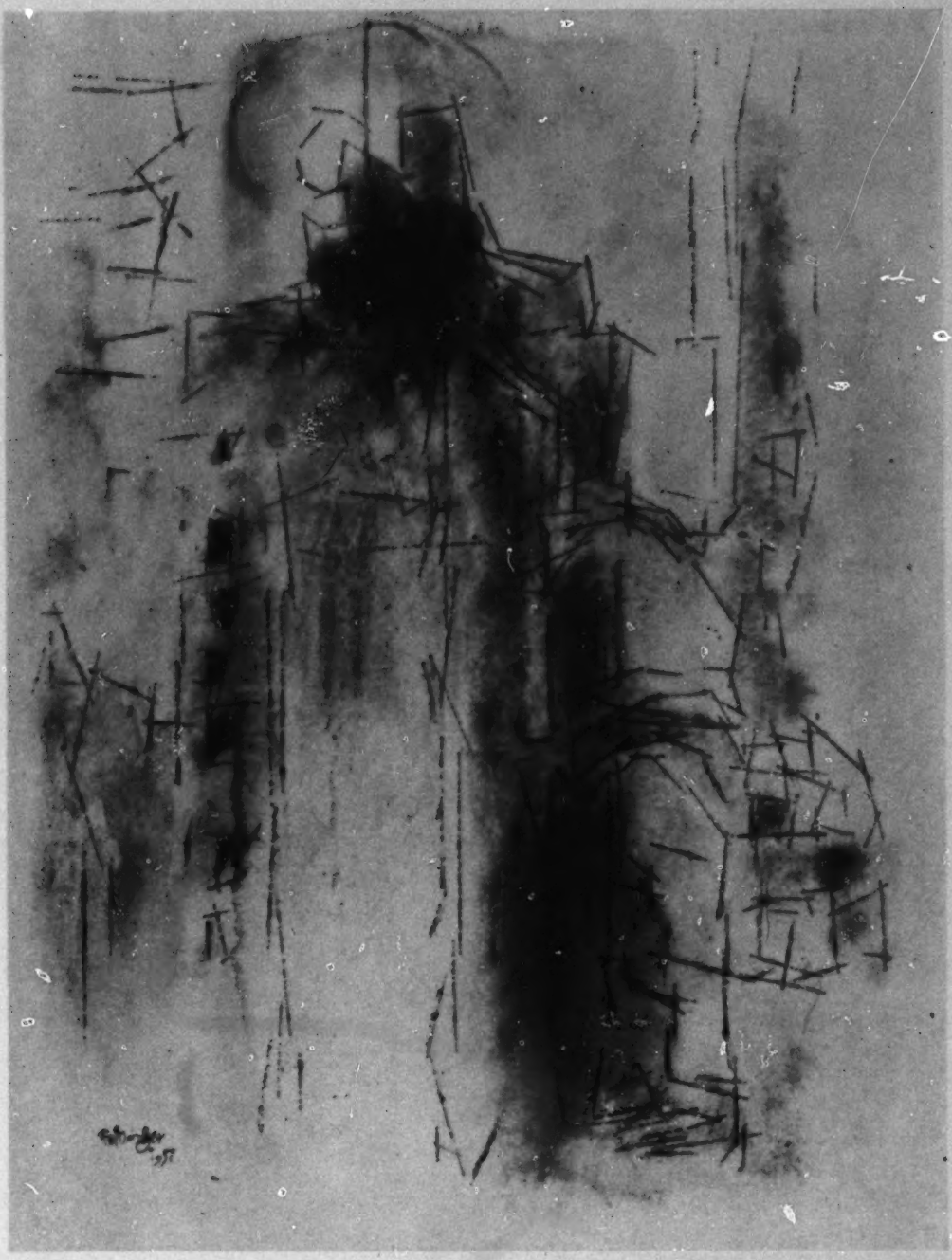
1951

36 Windclouds 12⅛x18⅝"

37 Seascape 12½x18¾"

38 Off Madison Square 19¾x15"





1951

39 Fan-shaped Cloud, Pink
12x18⅝"

40 Marine, Barren Coast
11¾x18¼"

41 All Directions 11¾x18"

42 Moon over the Hills
12x18¼"

43 Pink Moonrise 11½x18¼"

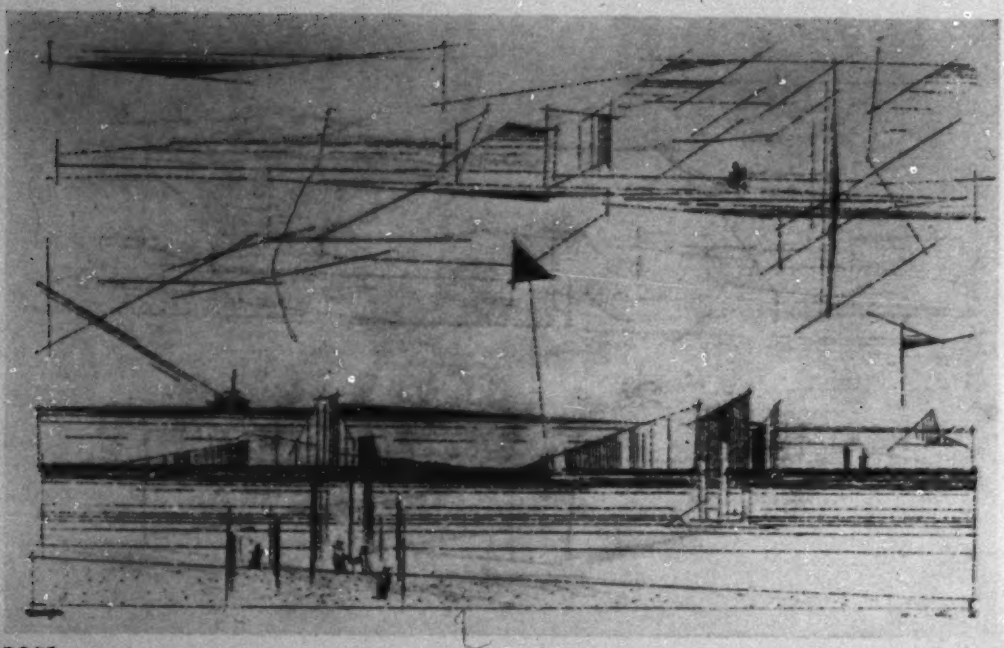
44 Floating in Space
11¾x18¼"

45 Streetlights II, Paris
11¼x17¼"

46 The Setting Sun 11½x18¼

47 Steamer with Smoke Banners
11¾x18"

48 Atmosphere 12x18½"



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